



MINOR PROPHETS MALACHI

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4

Open: Greet, Praises, Requests, Pray

Supplies: Soap, water, pepper, bowls, video of gold being refined by fire, ratty shirt, balloon, 2 liter bottle, money/coins, heavy stone.

Ask:

Who remembers which prophet we spoke about last week? (Zechariah)
Yes, we talked about the two prophets that prophesied at the same time of the rebuilding of the Temple. Haggai encouraged the people to work and rebuild. Zechariah also encouraged them while pointing them to the coming Messiah. Well, today we will talk about our final Minor Prophet. Can anyone remember any of the others we've talked about and maybe something about them? (Go through all the Minor Prophets on the timeline.

Background:

Our final prophet is Malachi. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, and it is believed he prophesied around 420 BC. He was a little over 400 years before Jesus and about 100 years after the return from Babylon. In the book of Malachi, we see God and the people asking questions. These same questions will be our focus today. The questions are meant to point to the heart of how the people are worshipping God. God doesn't just want sacrifices, he wants our hearts.

Explain:

This is our last Minor Prophet! We have gone through all the 11 others and will finish with Malachi, the final book of the Old Testament. Think of all that the people of Israel have been through. They were rebuilding the Temple. Does anyone remember why? What happened that they needed to rebuild it? (It was sacked by the Babylonians and the people were taken captive. This after the people of Judah were taken captive by the Assyrians. Can you imagine what it would feel like coming home after 70 years to the promised land?

Explain Continued:

What do you think the people felt? How would you feel? Thankful? Hopeful? Excited? Well, I think the people felt that way for a bit, but guess what? After all of God's faithfulness, they started to turn astray again. This time, they didn't run after idols, they simply stopped caring.

In chapters 1 and 2 of Malachi, he explains some problems the people have and some sins they're committing. We see these in their questions. Let's look at all the questions.

Questions Around the Room:

Take the kids to different parts of the room for each question. At each station, have an object to explain the question as it relates to the kids.

Question #1

Malachi 1:2- "In what way have you loved us?" Give the kids a large stone to hold while you talk. So here, the Israelites are annoyed with God. They feel like God must not really love them because they are still under foreign oppression. They are out of Babylon, but Persia is still over them. With this burden they begin to think, God couldn't really love us. If he did, he wouldn't keep us here. I don't know about you, but I've had thoughts like this before. If God really loved me, would he make me endure this? In the end, God is in control. Just like your parents make you go to school or eat your vegetables, sometimes we don't like the things that are good for us or that will benefit us in the long run. We don't know why God allows us to go through some things, but we can trust that he does love us and is good.

Question #2

1:6-7 "In what ways have we despised your name?" and "In what way have we defiled you?" The Israelites are basically wondering, "God we're giving you sacrifices, what else do you want? They are halfhearted. They aren't giving God their best. All their sacrifices are blemished, and they don't feel like God is worth their best. Have you ever bought something from a thrift store that wound up broken or messed up? (Hand out ratty clothes or a broken toy). Once I bought a science kit from a thrift store and was so excited, but when I got home and opened the box, it was full of trash. A person didn't donate a nice toy, it was a box of garbage. Sometimes we don't offer God our best. We offer him whatever is convenient and doesn't cost us much.

Question #3

3:7- "In what way shall we return?" Have you ever done something wrong, gotten caught, but didn't want to admit that you did the wrong thing? Or tried to pretend that it wasn't so bad? So the Israelites aren't offering good sacrifices, and now their question is, "well, what do you want me to do about it?" What is the obvious answer? The obvious answer is to do the right thing with the right heart. But what we tend to do is make excuses.

Have a balloon and a 2 liter bottle with cap. Place the balloon mostly in the bottle, leaving the tube out to blow into. Blow up the balloon as best you can (it won't get very big as it is in the bottle), then tie it off and let it fall into the bottle. Place the cap on the bottle. Then, squeeze or step on the bottle. Notice how the bottle shrinks. With our excuses, we try to shrink our sin. But the truth is, we can't shrink it. Sin is sin. No amount of excuses takes it away, and when those are gone, (let off the balloon), it's all still there. Our sin is only removed when we come to Jesus and ask his forgiveness. Then, the sin is gone completely, not just covered up or trying to shrink by excuses.

Question #4

3:8- "In what way have we robbed you?" Hand out money to the kids. Explain about tithing. The Israelites were no longer tithing to God. They were withholding their money, keeping it for themselves. The truth is, all that we have belongs to God. It isn't ours anyway. So we need to generously give to God what he has given us. Whether we do this with 10% (that is a tithe), or time, or whatever else we can give, as Christians, our life and all in it belongs to God. How can you give today?

Question #5

3:13- "What have we spoken against you?" The people's hearts are hard. They are frustrated that God is calling them to a higher standard and longing to make excuses and get out of it. Do you see how the chasm is widening? These are people recently brought back from exile, but they still can't uphold God's law. Their hearts are still hard and far from him. No matter what, the people and God are far from one another. (Back away from the kids across the room. Ask them to get to you in one hap, but make sure it is impossible.) See, this is where the people are before the New Testament. It's hopeless, it's impossible. But then God does the incredible. He shows how he loves us by sending his son. He offers the unblemished sacrifice of Jesus. He gives the people a way to return. He is beyond generous by offering Jesus. And through Jesus we can have new hearts. Through Jesus, we can cross this great chasm because his blood covers us and our sins. We are free and forgiven because of his grace.

Read: Malachi 3:1-4

Explain:

When we come to Jesus, we aren't perfect immediately. But God, in his patient process, begins to clean and purify us.

Do an Experiment:

Grab a bowl with water and sprinkle a lot of pepper in it. Stick your hand in it and see the pepper come out. Then, stick your hand in a bowl of soapy water and then into the pepper. See how it doesn't stick.

Explain:

God's grace cleanses us, and he also helps us to stay clean. Those old habits may be hard to break, but through the power of God, as we allow him to work in our lives and cleanse us, he starts to kill those old habits and rid our lives of them.

(If time) Watch a Video:

Look at this video of gold being refined. Explain that gold is a precious metal, but it often has impurities in it. God is called a consuming fire in Jeremiah and it means that he consumes our sin. He purifies us and makes us clean. This process isn't always easy. Sometimes we have to go through hard trials for him to shape and purify us. The New Testament often talked about salvation in three ways: God did save us, he is saving us, and he will save us. He saved us on the cross. When we trust in him and seek his forgiveness for our sins, accepting his grace, we are saved. But he also keeps saving us- he keeps making us more like him. Finally, he will save us completely one day. One day, we will be made perfect in his sight and be forever with him in heaven. The refining fire is working on Christians now.

Timeline:

Have the kids color the prophet Malachi and place him on the timeline. He prophesied around 420 BC.

Memorize: Malachi 3:3

Close in Prayer



Blow up the balloon within the bottle. Then, tie off the balloon and drop it fully into the bottle. Replace the cap and step on the bottle with the weight of an adult to see it shrink.



Place the pepper in the bowl and stick your finger in it. See how the pepper sticks? Then place soap on your hands and stick your hand in. The pepper will scatter to the sides of the bowl.



Malachi



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